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Box 10

Covert Operations

1954-1967

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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Pandolfi
June 5, 1964

MEMORANDUM FOR THE FILE

SUBJECT: Covert Action Panel Meeting 6/5/64
(Discussion With Secretary, Special Group, et al.)

On 6/5/64, at the Board's offices, Mr. Murphy held a meeting of the Board's Covert Action Panel (Messrs. Murphy, Gray and Langer) also attended by General Doolittle; J. Patrick Coyne; and A. R. Ash.

At the invitation of Chairman Murphy the meeting was joined by Mr. Peter Jessup who since January 20, 1964, has been serving as Secretary of the Special NSC 5412/2 Group.

In answer to questions asked by Panel members, Mr. Jessup provided a description of the Special Group and its activities, as follows:

The Special Group is chaired by Mr. McGeorge Bundy; Mr. Alexis Johnson represents the State Department; Mr. Cyrus Vance represents the Secretary of Defense; and Mr. McCone the CIA. These Group members are back-stopped by small staffs in their respective agencies.

Meetings of the Special Group are held once each week. They are "action" meetings not talk-fests, and the members have done their homework beforehand. The Chairman of the JCS attends when the agenda includes subjects of particular JCS interest (since January he has attended two meetings for discussion of Cuba matters).

Most of the covert actions considered by the Special Group are CIA proposals, although other members suggest actions (for example, State Department brought up for discussion the matter of supplying arms in Tangayika). The State Department is considered to serve as the "conscience" of the Special Group in its consideration of proposed covert actions. During the current year some 23 of 39 proposals were favorably considered by the Group.

About 50 per cent of the covert actions coming before the Special Group are carried out by the Joint Reconnaissance Center (JRC) of the JCS, in the aerial reconnaissance field. Since January 1, the Group has approved actions with respect to Cuba, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Panama, Chile, Congo, Angola, Tibet, Zanzibar, and China, among others. For example, the April 29, 1964, meeting included discussions of the Chilean elections; Cuba; a JRC forecast of peripheral missions; and reconnaissance coverage from India of a Chinese Communist test range.

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Minutes of Special Group meetings are provided only to the members. (In answer to a specific question from Mr. Murphy, Mr. Jessup said that to his knowledge there has been no systematic review by the Special Group concerning the results of actions taken pursuant to previous Group approvals.)

The Group follows the policy of referring to the President those proposed actions as to which Group members have differences of opinion regarding the probability and acceptability of "noise levels" which would result from the actions. Since January, the subject of Cuba has been taken up with the President with a view to obtaining guidance on the level of covert action activity desired during this election year.

Mr. Jessup concluded his visit with the Board Panel and departed the meeting at this point.

Next, the Board Panel meeting was joined by Messrs. Dick Helms and Cord Meyer of CIA.

Mr. Helms said that with regard to Cuba there has been an effective stand-down in externally-mounted sabotage operations since February. Policy approvals have been given only to oddments of "passive sabotage", such as supplying agents with incendiary pencils, etc.; a mattress factory and a plastic works were burned down; but CIA does not consider that such operations are enough and they are not the whole program that CIA wants to conduct. The "Track II" paper in the State Department calls for CIA support of Cuban exile group activity, but no CIA direction and control; and few results are possible from such an approach, with Artime burning down a sugar mill, but Manolo Ray getting arrested by the British. There have been acts of sabotage performed on tractors carried by vessels en route to Cuba. On the economic front, after Castro had put out false rumors of an expected short sugar crop, in order to run up the world market price, the CIA countered by assembling correct information which when published brought the price down again.

With regard to Soviet personnel in Cuba, Mr. Helms estimated that there are from 15,000 to 18,000 on the Island, although U. S. intelligence community estimators place the figure at from 4,000 to 5,000.

Concerning Chile, Mr. Helms said that the coming Presidential elections there on September 13 are viewed with serious concern. The Socialists there are more radical than the Communists, and candidate Allende (backed by the FRAP party) may have a strong chance of winning. Moreover, the constitutional-minded Chileans would accept a regularly-elected Communist as President and would not take coup action to put him out of office. Allende is being supported by the USSR at the rate of about one-quarter million dollars a month, and his success at the polls is important to the Soviets who can then point to the election as an example of a "peaceful" Communist victory.

CIA support of Chilean Christian Democrat candidate Frei included \$750,000 in March; and on May 14, another \$1.25 million was added following the urgings of major business elements in Chile and the U. S. Some support is also being given to anti-Communist candidate Edwards; to Protestants; and to poll-taking groups.

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Referring to Panama, Mr. Helms observed that CIA appeared for the moment to have backed the right candidate -- Robles.

With reference to Brazil, Mr. Helms said that the coup was Brazil - inspired and spontaneous, not a U. S. operation. He added that Brazil had come close to being lost to the Communists through subversion from the top (Goulart).

Turning to the subject of Southeast Asia, Mr. Helms said that there have been many lengthy discussions about South Vietnam and about getting the Viet Cong out of that country. This objective has been talked to death, and all possibilities considered; but no one seems to be preoccupied with finding a way to replace the political fabric that was lost in South Vietnam when the Diem regime was overthrown. The present government is all a military show. Mr. Helms added that the Buddhists are a political group but not cohesive. As for prospects of effecting intelligence infiltration of North Vietnam, Mr. Helms said that CIA had been trying, but the target country is small and there is not much intelligence to obtain there. At present MACV is in charge of sabotage efforts against North Vietnam. In Mr. Helms' opinion there is a clear need to create a new political structure in South Vietnam or else there will be little use in "striking against the North".

In Laos, Mr. Helms said, the Pathet Lao can take over at will. He noted that the Meo's are still intact (only one battalion) and are being supplied by CIA air drops (from Thailand) of weapons, food and medicines.

Mr. Cord Meyer referred to the crisis of the Adoula government in the Congo. There are 200 men in Brazzaville, with Chicom support, ready to assassinate cabinet officers. When the UN forces leave on June 30 the 30,000-man Congolese National Army will have a big job to do. Mobutu and officers of the Army are wary of providing much training down to the platoon level, because they distrust these troops in arms. Meanwhile, CIA has supplied the Army with 6 airplanes and pilots, and authority has now been received by CIA to double this support.

Regarding Cyprus, Mr. Helms said that the Turks are threatening to go onto the island with troops within 24 hours.

Messrs. Helms and Meyer left the Panel meeting at this point.

The Board Panel meeting was next joined by Mr. Alexis Johnson of the State Department. He filled the Panel members in on the latest Cyprus development including the President's message to the head of the Turkish government; and General Lemnitzer's trip to Turkey to point out the hazard to Turkey's NATO relationships if Turkey moved into Cyprus with troops.

Panel Chairman Murphy asked Mr. Johnson for any comments he might have regarding State Department relationships with the Special Group, and with the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board.

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Mr. Johnson said that as State Department representative on the Special Group he tries to do the difficult job of viewing the risks against the gains involved in proposed covert actions. Issues rarely arise in the Special Group because problems are first staffed in the member agencies. In State Mr. Johnson is staffed by Mr. Scott of INR who maintains contacts with FBI and CIA -- the relation with FBI having been recently regularized as had been done earlier in the case of CIA. Mr. Scott consults Mr. Johnson on all covert operations and any issues, and also focuses on NRO matters for Mr. Johnson. In all, Mr. Johnson feels that the Special Group system is satisfactory. He acknowledged, however, that the Special Group does not have a procedure for systematic look-back at the results of programs previously approved. From State's point of view, he could see the need for such a procedure, for he never hears about projects once they are approved -- unless something goes wrong. Mr. Johnson said that within State a quarterly review is made of political action programs, and he sees a need for monitoring of programs in the Special Group.

As for State's relations with the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, Mr. Johnson recalled that one problem arose with the Board's November 22 report on the Dunlap case, which caused him considerable concern -- particularly the discussion language supporting the Board's recommendations on subjects involving State, CIA and FBI. Mr. Johnson thought that he should have been given an opportunity to comment to the Board concerning the FBI and CIA complaints which were reflected in the recommendations.

Mr. Coyne then gave Mr. Johnson some of the background of one of the Board's recommendations which involved State-CIA-FBI and which pertained to a development of such sensitivity as to closely restrict the Board's disclosure of it. (Mr. Coyne took the initiative, after the Panel meeting, to suggest to FBI that Mr. Johnson be briefed on this sensitive item, in order that State Department might be in a position to assist, and not unwittingly hinder, related operations of FBI and CIA interest abroad. FBI did this soon afterward, and Mr. Johnson expressed to Mr. Coyne his satisfaction at this handling of the matter.)

Mr. Murphy next brought up the subject of the recently discovered audio penetration of the U. S. Embassy, Moscow. Mr. Murphy noted that the preliminary USIB damage assessment contained State Department comments to the effect that the compromise was not too serious, and he wondered if this accurately reflected the State Department view of the matter. Mr. Johnson said that during the audio penetration period the State Department sent many messages to our Ambassador in Moscow, telling him to make certain representations to the Soviets; and in turn the Ambassador sent messages to Washington reporting on what he had said to the Soviets and what they said to him; so, Mr. Johnson felt that no damaging breach had occurred in this regard -- except for perhaps any Department or Embassy analyses that might have appeared in messages intercepted by the Soviets. Mr. Johnson added that our people at posts behind the Iron Curtain assume that they are "bugged" and they behave accordingly; and Mr. Johnson related to the Panel his own experience while serving at Prague where "he dug out 35 mikes".

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Mr. Murphy raised with Mr. Johnson the question as to whether subordinates should be allowed to make decisions such as the cutting of the co-axial cables discovered leading out of the Embassy in Moscow -- Mr. Murphy pointing out that such action appeared premature and prevented the technicians from making technical examinations of value and importance. Mr. Murphy also noted that subordinates in State and CIA had assumed responsibility for the decision that no attempt would be made to exploit the devices found in Moscow. Mr. Johnson was unaware of policy direction regarding such matters, and Mr. Coyne made known to him the provisions of NSC 5618 covering the subject.

With reference to North Vietnam, Mr. Johnson noted that the situation is most discouraging insofar as covert infiltration actions are concerned. He said that CIA had tried hard, and the activity has now been transferred to MACV in Saigon.

Mr. Johnson concluded his visit with the Board Panel and departed the meeting.

In executive session, Panel Chairman Murphy asked that the Board Staff's review of the Special Group minutes include summaries of items pertaining to Vietnam and Cuba, for later study by the Panel.

The Panel Meeting adjourned at 12:15 p.m.

A. R. Ash

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